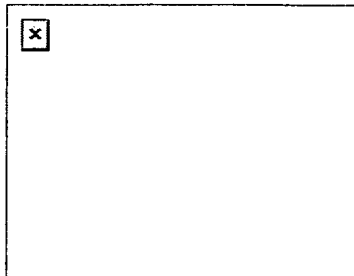


You are here: [Home](#) > [Totally Free Internet Access](#) > [Download Options](#)

FREE INTERNET ACCESS | ELECTRONICS | FOR YOUR HOME | JEWELRY | OFFICE | FOOD | SPORTS | TOYS | HEALTH & BEAUTY



The Best Things In Life Are Free

FULL DOWNLOAD: (Recommended Method)

Download BlueLight.com Totally Free Internet Access and save the file on your computer. Take note of which folder you've saved it to. After download is complete, doubleclick on the downloaded file to begin installation. BlueLight.exe (2,690KB)



(avg. 14 min. download on 28.8 modem)

DOWNLOAD TO FLOPPY:

Download BlueLight.com Totally Free Internet Service for floppy disks.

Disk 1 - BlueLight_disk.exe (1,380KB)

Disk 2 - BlueLight_disk.w02 (1,380KB)

Disk 3 - BlueLight_disk.w03 (1,160KB)

[Download Now!](#)

[Download Options](#)

[Help with Installation](#)

[Questions?](#)

[Local Access Numbers](#)

techsupport@bluelight.com

For detailed, step-by-step instructions to install, register and use BlueLight's Totally Free Internet Access, click [here](#).

If your questions are not answered by our help pages, please email us at: techsupport@bluelight.com

or call: 1-409-776-6515

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 486 50 Mhz. min. • 16 MB RAM • Windows 95/98 NT • 14.4 Kbps modem 	<p>Sorry, Macintosh support currently not available. Check back here for support in the future.</p>

FOR A CD-ROM DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME:

If you'd prefer to have a CD-ROM with the software mailed to you please call toll free: 1-888-945-9255 (please note: no tech support at this #)

or email: cdrequest@bluelight.com

Information Desk

Copyright © 2000 BlueLight.com.

Smart Computing.

In Plain English

[Subscribe Today](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Register Now](#)
[Home](#) | [Tech Support](#) | [Q&A Board](#) | [Article Search](#) | [Subscribe & Show](#)
Speakeasy Business DSL

Broadband w/o the Phone
Company No Start Up Costs
www.Speakeasy.net

Business Managed Internet

Reliable, High-Speed, Managed
Internet from AT&T. View
Brochure!
business.att.com

Juno ISP Official Site

Juno internet access only
\$6.95/mo Half the price, all the
features!
www.juno.com

PeoplePC: 30 Days Free

Reliable unlimited Internet access.
Sign-Up for PeoplePC Online!
PeoplePC.saveamillion.net

[Ads by Goooooogle](#)
Trial Subscription
Try 3 Issues of *Smart Computing*, RISK-FREE!
[What is a risk-free subscription?](#)

First Name:
Last Name:
Address:
City:
State: Select A State

ZIP:
Email:
SEND ME SMART COMPUTING!

[Canadian residents click here](#)
[All other foreign residents click here](#)

Free Internet Access

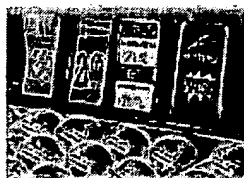
Plugged In

December 2000 • Vol. 11 Issue 12

Page(s) 92-97 in print issue

Free Internet Access

Let The Buyer Beware



When most shoppers hear the word "free" associated with a product, the skeptic inside them rises to the surface. If a product was actually useful, it would cost something. Nothing actually is free; there's always a catch. Finally, they issue that famous warning: *Caveat Emptor!*

Where free Internet access is concerned, the buyer *should* beware. In exchange for free Internet access, you'll have to give up something other than money, whether it's some personal information, space on your monitor for advertisements, or the reliability of your connection.

Industry experts are split on whether free Internet access represents the future in the United States, and stock investors seem to be skeptical about the longevity of publicly traded companies offering free Internet access. Millions of people have registered with companies offering free Internet access, though, and millions more are expected to sign up in the next few years. Free Internet access may be a free product that actually defies skeptical logic.

■ How They Work

Free Internet access is typically offered by an ISP (Internet service provider), and you can usually find two types of free Internet access.

09/8/5 897

Partnerships. Most free ISPs align themselves with an already existing, well-known brand name, such as a Web portal, an e-commerce company, or a department store, among others. Customers of those businesses find out about the free ISP through the partnership.

It's common for well-known businesses to contract with a third-party, behind-the-scenes company to provide free Internet access, marketing it through their already-known brand name. For instance, Kmart offers free Internet access to customers by sponsoring BlueLight.com, which is operated by Spinway. BlueLight.com customers have a chance, through the site's home page, to make online purchases through Kmart. See the "Something For Nothing" sidebar for URLs (universal resource locators) for the ISPs we mention in this article.

On its own. Some free ISPs forego aligning themselves, instead trying to develop their own brand-name fame. NetZero and Juno are free ISPs that have built solid subscriber bases without relying on major partnerships.

Although each free ISP has its own business model, most create revenue using targeted advertising. Answers you give when you sign up help determine the on-screen advertisements you see while surfing or ads you'll receive in e-mail. When you log on, a popup ad usually appears on top of all other windows on your computer screen, and it remains visible until you sign off the service.

Many free ISPs track your movements through the Internet and share this information with potential advertisers, allowing them to generate additional targeted advertising. Read any agreements you see as you sign up for the service very carefully.

If you attempt to close the advertising window, you'll likely lose your Internet connection. Each advertiser-based, free ISP offers different ad placement and different ad sizes; you'll have to test various free ISPs to see whether any of the ad placements are acceptable to you.

■ What They Offer

If you're expecting features similar to AOL's (America Online) with a free ISP, you might as well stop reading.

Free ISPs usually offer calendars, portfolio tracking, e-mail services, and a customizable home page that displays personalized news. Finding a free ISP that offers services beyond those basics, which are also available through dozens of Web portals, is almost impossible.

A fee-based ISP typically offers a few more unique services for your monthly access fee, usually by contracting with established Web sites. For example, Prodigy Internet (<http://www.prodigy.com>) has a search engine through LookSmart, a shopping service through Amazon.com and uBid, and a job-search service through HotJobs.com. Prodigy also offers chat, instant messaging, junk e-mail blocking services, free Web-hosting space, and child-protection software. Again, though, many of these services are available free elsewhere on the Web.

Most free ISPs require that you download the service's software. Some will send the software on CD-ROM, but it could take a few weeks to receive it in the mail. With a fee-based ISP, especially one with a national presence, you will probably receive the service's software (unsolicited) in the mail or in a magazine. You can also go to the service's Web site and download the software, assuming you have alternate means of connecting.

Sometimes, fee-based ISPs offer their subscribers high-speed, broadband access for a higher monthly fee. Most local ISPs offer some form of broadband access, and sometimes they will help you set up the connection in person. Your ability to get broadband access through a national ISP usually depends on the city in which you live. Free ISPs almost never offer broadband access, instead focusing on slower, dial-up access. Some industry experts think fee-based access will eventually migrate completely to broadband access, leaving dial-up access for the free ISPs.

Another difference between free ISPs and fee-based ISPs lies in the technical support options you have available. Technical support with most national fee-based ISPs is far more readily available, both by telephone and e-mail, than the support you'll find with most free ISPs. However, each free ISP's level of technical support service is different. If you choose a local, fee-based ISP, you might have the option of receiving face-to-face technical support, or a technician from the local ISP might set up the Internet connection for you.

The most visible difference between fee-based and free ISPs is still the advertisements. However, all of you who are cynical about fee-based ISPs will probably point out that although the banner and pop-up ads aren't constantly on the screen, users sometimes are greeted with ads when they sign on to the service and as they move through various areas of the service, all while paying \$19.95 to \$21.95 per month for access. Among fee-based ISPs, however, local providers are less likely to bombard you with ads than are national ISPs.



As you can see, advertisement placement and size differs depending on the free ISP.

Freeinternet.com anchors its ad across the top of the screen by default, and you can move it later; you can easily move AltaVista's Free Access ad, but you can't resize it.

If you're looking for even more features, you could try AOL, which is an online service that also provides Internet access. AOL gives users volumes of unique content, in addition to chat rooms, instant messaging, and interactive games, as well as access to the Internet. AOL also offers several personalized features that let you customize the service to meet your exact needs. AOL's software is extremely easy to set up and is readily available on CDs that seem to be everywhere. AOL costs \$21.95 per month for unlimited access, but AOL also uses several popup ads as you sign on to the service and move through various areas.

■ Reliability Issues

Free ISPs have two major issues when it comes to reliability: Can they give you access to the Internet when you need it? Will they be around two or three years from now?

Most free ISPs have good report cards as far as dial-up availability is concerned. As with most fee-based ISPs, you'll usually get sporadic connections and slow access speeds if you dial in to a free ISP at high usage times (usually evenings). At non-peak usage times, the connections we made through the free ISPs were extremely reliable.

The overall reliability of the free ISPs we tried was solid for the most part. However, we were a bit frustrated when we tried to get technical support to fix a problem immediately; however, each free ISP's response time is a little different.

As far as the second question is concerned, industry analysts are split on the future profitability, and, of course, survivability, of ISPs that offer free Internet access. According to the Strategis Group, an industry-analysis firm, about 12 million people currently use free Internet services. The Strategis Group projects the number will triple to 37 million users by 2005. Jupiter Communications estimates more than 10 million Internet users will log on consistently through a free ISP by 2003, up from 2.5 million in 1999.

Those subscriber numbers may not accurately reflect the realistic use of free ISPs, though. Many people who sign up for free Internet access only want to try out the service and don't actually use it on a regular basis, if at all. Free ISP users also are highly likely to bounce from company to company with little or no consequence.

■ The Investors' Take

Even though the customer base for free ISPs is projected to grow, investors are skeptical. The

stock prices in publicly traded, free ISP companies, including Juno Online Services (stock symbol: JWEB) and NetZero (NZRO), have plunged more than 90% from recent high levels. Juno plunged from a high of \$87 per share on Dec. 12, 1999 to \$4.50 on Aug. 15, 2000. NetZero's range spans from \$40 per share on Dec. 21, 1999 to its \$3.00 per share trading price at press time.

They aren't alone. Stock prices are also dropping for fee-based ISPs and online services, such as Prodigy Communications (PRGY), AOL (AOL), and Excite@Home (ATHM). AOL dropped from \$95.81 to \$40.25, Prodigy plunged from \$35.44 to \$6.38, and Excite@Home from \$59.75 to \$12.88 in nine months from late 1999 to mid-2000.

If you consider cash on hand a key ingredient for the long-term success of free ISPs, NetZero may fit your model. According to a recent NetZero press release, the company has \$248 million in cash and short-term investments. NetZero continues to attempt to promote itself through several means, such as through sponsoring the halftime shows during the "NBA on NBC."

Juno, meanwhile, has an estimated \$75 million to \$100 million in cash, according to the documents it filed with the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission).

If you're expecting free ISP's stock prices to make a comeback, you may want to take a closer look at their business models. Industry analysts who project a large increase in the number of free ISP customers over the next few years are banking on greater numbers of lower-income groups using the services. However, investors don't seem overly encouraged by this idea. Low-income users still need a computer to use free ISPs, and advertisers may not be eager to target low-income customers with the ads free ISPs need to survive.

Some industry analysts say the costs of attracting new customers to free ISPs are too high to generate consistent profits. Others say customers who get tired of the ads are willing to use a fee-based ISP to avoid the ads.

However, some analysts say once a free ISP reaches 2 million active subscribers, its cost-per-customer decreases significantly, giving it a better chance at profitability and survival. Both Juno and NetZero claim to have more than 2 million active subscribers.

■ It Isn't For Everyone

If you need the Internet for your job, using a free ISP as your only Internet access probably isn't a good idea. Many people currently use free ISPs to back up their Internet subscription package. If your fee-based ISP is inoperable, use the free ISP account to access the Internet. Users who pay for a locally based ISP may want to sign up for a free ISP account to use when traveling outside of the local ISP's service area.

If you're determined to save the approximately \$250 per year you'd spend for a fee-based ISP, you should probably sign up for accounts with several free ISPs. Try the services for several days before canceling your fee-based ISP account; you need to make sure your retinas can handle staring at those brightly colored, never-ending popup ads. ■

by Kyle Schurman

Something For Nothing

Here's a list of some of the best-known free ISPs operating in the United States at press time. Keep in mind, though, that this list may change as free ISPs merge with other companies, change their names, or go out of business. Before signing

up, make sure the free ISP offers toll-free access through a local telephone number in your area.

1stUp.com <http://www.1stup.com>
Address.com <http://www.address.com>
AltaVista's Free Access <http://www.microav.com>
BlueLight.com <http://www.bluelight.com/freeinternet>
Freeinternet.com <http://www.freeinternet.com>
FreeLane <http://freelane.excite.com>
iFreedom <http://www.ifreedom.com>
iwin.com <http://www.iwin.com>
Juno <http://dl.www.juno.com/get/web>
Lycos <http://free.lycos.com>
Nettaxi.com <http://www.nettaxi.com>
NetZero <http://www.netzero.com>
Spinway <http://www.spinway.com>
The Simpsons <http://cobrand.1stup.com/simpsons/start.html>
Winfire <http://www.winfire.com>

Out Of Business. ISPs, free or for a fee, come and go. Here are some well-known free ISPs that have recently gone out of business.

FreeNSafe <http://www.freensafe.com>
Freewwwweb <http://www.freewwwweb.com>
WorldSpy <http://www.worldspy.com/freeisp/isp.html>



PeoplePC: 30 Days Free

Reliable unlimited Internet access.
 Sign-Up for PeoplePC Online!
PeoplePC.saveamillion.net/P...

Net Zero; 1st Month Free

Then, Net Zero Platinum:
 \$9.95/mo., Net Zero HiSpeed 3G:
 \$14.95/mo.
NetZero.BetterInternetSoluti...

Local Internet Provider

PeoplePC offers Virus Protection &
 Pop-Up Blocker. Starts at
 \$4.97/mo.
www.PeoplePC.com

Isp Business

Search & compare business
 internet service providers (ISPs).
www.business.com

Ads by Goooooogle

Want more information about a topic you found of interest while reading this article? Type a word or phrase that identifies the topic and click "Search" to find relevant articles from within our editorial database.

Enter A Subject (key words or a phrase):

- ☒ ALL Words ('digital' AND 'photography')
- ☐ ANY Words ('digital' OR 'photography')
- ☐ Exact Match ('digital photography'- all words MUST appear together)

[Search](#)

[Return to Previous Page](#)

[Home](#) [Copyright & Legal Information](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Site Map](#) [Contact Us](#)

Copyright © 2007 Sandhills Publishing Company U.S.A. All rights reserved.